

ASL DIGEST 6.5

August 5, 1996

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Editor's Notes:

Born 8/1/96 Sage O'Brien Hundsorfer 6#9", 19.75" long, 3:35AM. Both mother and baby are doing fine, but Sage can't do night scenarios without the back page of Backblast #2.

Thanks for everyone's best wishes. Now back to the pre-programmed digest:

WWF creeps up on us like a concealed dare death squad, guys, and while I won't be there, feel free to hang me with a loss to you.

I'm learning there is a thirst for the inside scoop, so in Last Call, I have information from the ASL world which you won't get on some namby pamby assed automailer.

The 96 Annual is out, and, well, as my secretary would say: "It is the BOMB." I'll hand out grades later on, but visually, you'll have to say this is the best annual thus far, scenarios will stack up against any annual put out to date and, shameless self-promotion aside, these articles are designed to make you a Better ASL Player (c), not just rehash some facts presented in government publication 56-GPO-8323094587676-ARMY. I'm not even going to gripe about the full page adds for Third Reich and WSIM. Scenario Pack #1 is also advertised, and looks intriguing.

STIFF OF THE MONTH:

Me, for inviting Jazz down from Ft. Collins and then DICING the hell out of him. I mean, my dice were so hot I pinched their little cheeks and called them Michelle Pfeiffer.

Unsung Heros

Tim Hundsorfer Here's the first in a series of scenarios I plan on doing on black troops in WWII. If anybody has any resources, pass them along. It's a sad fact that U.S. minorities have never really gotten the credit they deserved for their efforts and sacrifices in WWII.

UNSUNG HEROES

Guam--March 24, 1945--The 52nd Marine Defense Battalion was one of two USMC combat units comprised of African Americans. The USMC, like the U.S. Army, was segregated throughout the course of WWII. Black Marines, like their Army counterparts, were led by white officers, and were frequently used as work units. However, the line between Black Marines and White Marines was not quite as pronounced as in the Army, and while the 52nd was never offered an opportunity to distinguish itself, to the White commanders and base cohabitants, in the Marshalls and on Guam, the 52nd proved to be as proud and effective as any in the USMC. During it's stay on Guam, the 52nd was called on not only to provide air defense, but to round up Japanese stragglers from the actions the previous July and August.

Victory conditions:

The US player wins by accumulating 10 CVP or accumulating at least 5 CVP while sustaining no CVP themselves.

Board configuration:

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+-----+
| 34   |      N^
|      | Only hexrows R-GG are playable.
|      |
+-----+
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Balance:

USMC: Delete Hero from US OB and exchange the 8-0 with a 8-1

JAPANESE: All American squads are 558's.

Turns: 6 turns

American sets up first

American moves first

Americans--Detachment A, 52nd Marine Defense Battalion [ELR:5]{SAN:5} Set up first, HIP in concealment terrain in any one hex in a hex numbered ≥ 8 : 458, 8-0, 149, HMG
Enter on turn 1 from East edge:

458x6, 8-1, 8-0, MMG, DC

Japanese--Remnants, Guam Garrison [ELR:2]{SAN:6} Set up in hexes numbered 3-7:

447, 347x5, 9-0, 8+1, LMG, Lt. Mtr., 1squad Foxhole x3, ?x4

SSR:

1) EC are wet, with mild breeze blowing from the east at start.

2) Japanese units suffer from ammunition shortage and Japanese half squads are not exempt from surrender. Japanese units may not set up HIP.

Aftermath: During it's time on Guam, the 52nd developed a skill at setting up ambushes and rounding up the Japanese that remained on the island. Sargeant (later Platoon Sargeant) Ezra Kelly led many patrols and was described by one of his senior (white) officers as: "really

gung ho. Absolutely fearless." The 52nd was to participate in the invasion of Okinawa, but the order was called off. The action on Guam was to be the last of the war for the 52nd--a fact that wore on their morale like a millstone around their neck. The feeling was that they were being used as a work battalion, rather than a combat formation. Despite proving themselves in landings in the Marshalls and numerous combat patrols on Guam, the 52nd couldn't shed its second-line status to USMC top brass.

CREATING A PLATOON LEADER CAMPAIGN GAME

After trying my hand at designing a number of scenarios, and looking over the Platoon Leader scenarios by Steve Swan, I wondered about the differences and similarities in doing these.

With scenarios, your main concerns are player interest and balance. If you don't have some element to interest players in trying your scenario, you might as well not bother. Without a reasonable balance, you not only prejudice players against that scenario, but against any other scenarios you may design.

But a Platoon Leader campaign is quite different than this, for a number of reasons.

First, it would take dozens of playtests to get the correct feel of balance, mixing up various RG available. My experience with A!P! taught me that the interplay of purchases can unbalance a scenario very quickly. For example, a motorcycle company can be devastating if the opposing side purchased a lot of infantry, but could be next to worthless if they purchased heavy weapons or OBA. Each RG should be tested, and its capabilities weighed against its cost. Sometimes, the element of potential costs and benefits must be weighed against risk.

The quasi-DYO feature of PL is one of its major assets, but it creates a complex web of possibilities for designers and players which may lead to a quick finish--particularly if the defender or attacker makes aggressive purchases. To a large extent, this is impossible to avoid, but it is important to not undervalue a certain RG (It will be purchased at a high rate) or overvalue a RG (it won't be purchased at all). Following the general lines which Mr. Swan has provided us is a good guide, but putting together standing lists of RG for different nationalities and units and having them together in the PL rules would have been the icing on this cake. The rules set down in the Tactics CG's would be a great asset as well. But overall, a general guideline should be built up in a system which allows for content and CPP costs for various units, that all ASL players could use to build a bigger, better DYO system that would integrate nicely with a CG setting--a task IMMINENTLY in reach.

Platoon Leader has subtle differences from CG or scenarios. For example, infantry RG must vary wildly, because the size and costs of different nationalities MUST be considered when designing a PL CG. Russian "platoons" for example, should be much larger (and therefore more costly) than German "platoons". If not, the Russians will get a substantial "bonus" of leaders and SW.

Overall, Platoon Leader is an intriguing ASL product. You have to love its potential, but I'd love to work with Mr. Swan on a list of RG to guide scenario designers.

Hall of the Mountain King

TSS2 (Terje Sparby)

HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING

KRONBORG, NORWAY, 21. April 1940: Elements of the 4. Brigade from the West of Norway, came marching across the mountains to Valdres. With orders to advance and retake everything they could from the Germans. A patrol reported a that a German outpost was at Kronborg bridge. Kp/IR 10 under the command of Capt. Sefland drove towards Kronborg, unloaded and began advancing through the woods along the road. At 1330 they encountered a German patrol and the battle began with the command "Fire, God damn it!"

Board configuration:

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|   |   |   |   N^
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
| 18| 40| Only rows G-BB are in play.
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VICTORY CONDITIONS: The Germans win at game end if there is no GO Norwegian squad East of the river.

Germans sets up first. Norwegians moves first.

TURNS: 9.5

Germans: [ELR:4]{SAN:3}

Set up on board 18, on or East of hexrow 10: 2x467 MMG LMG

Set up on board 40: 3x467 LMG 9-1 7-0

Set up on board 40 not less than 4 hexes from each other: 2x 1squad foxholes with a 248 and LMG each.

Set up in Ski Jump per SSR 4: 149

Norwegians KP/IR 10 [ELR 3] [SAN 4]

Set up on board 18, on or West of hexrow 8: 2x457 MMG HMG 8-0

Enter from West side board of 18 on turn 1: 8x457 9-1 8-0 7-0

Enter from West side of board 18, when there is no unbroken German squad on board 18:

British MLE 1897, towed by British truck 30-cwt, 228

SSR 1. Weather is Ground Snow (E3.72), with Wet EC and no wind at start.

2. All roads are unpaved and plowed. All buildings are wooden. No buildings exist on board 18. A bridge is hexes 18Q2 and 18Q3. The river is frigid and deep with a strong current running south.

3. Place these overlays as following: OG5: 1 on O5, 2 on P4. X10:1 on R6. X13: 1 on S6, 2 on T5.

4. The Germans receive a 80mm OBA module with scarce ammo. The German player records one Level 2 hill hex as containing a Ski Jump. Signify the hex with the ski jump by placing the (concealed) 149 with a field phone on a 2nd level counter. The Ski Jump is at level 4, has a +2 TEM and a stacking capacity of 1 SMC. It has an inherent field phone, and no movement to or from the ski jump is possible. The 149 may spot for the OBA.

Aftermath: The Norwegians advanced towards the river, and quickly established a MG nest upon the hilltop just in range of the Germans in the village. The Germans set up an artillery observation post in a ski jump nearby the town. The German MGs and mortars seemed to have a bad day, and the Norwegians soon got to the river. There a heavy firefight began, but after a while a Norwegian cannon arrived and forced the Germans out of their position. The escaping Germans were then pinned by the Norwegian MG nests up on the hillsides. More Norwegian artillery arrived and soon they crossed the river. By 1900 Kronberg had fallen back to Norwegian hands.

Notes: Playing Hall of the Mountain King

Terje did a great job digging out a situation which doesn't come up that often--Minor Allies assaulting a German-defended bridge. What makes this scenario fun are the unique elements for both sides: The Norwegian Gun. The German scarce OBA directed by a hero in a ski jump.

It's also a relatively fast little tournament-sized scenario with a twist: deep snow.

The Germans have to space out their initial set up on the west side of the river. Make the Norwegians hunt them down and keep the 75 offboard for as long as possible. Sighting a LMG right down the bridge, along with a SR on the bridge makes for what seems like an impenetrable line of defense.

The Norwegian can move on pretty quickly behind the hills of board 18. It's important to stay on the roads, because the deep snow eats you alive if you don't. Hammer the Germans on board 18 early with your troops that set up on-map, and then go after the ski jump with your MG. Shooting area fire, you get a 4FP+2 until you can link the MG up with the 9-1, that's not good, but it will be hard to knock that hero out of his nest.

Both sides have alternatives to consider. The German can bring down the OBA, knowing that the draw pile is littered with red cards and will pay that ugly +1 TEM for deep snow. The 9-1 can hold his fire or blaze away, losing concealment and making himself vulnerable when that 75 comes on. The Norwegians can mass an attack and then rush across the bridge, defying RFP and rolling across with a truck. Or try to overwhelm the German with bodies!

My solo playing of this scenario came down to a truck loaded with an 8-0 and 457, rushing across the bridge on the next to last turn through 2 LMG attacks, surviving both and getting back to DM the 9-1 and his LMG-toting half squad. Very tense.

New Product Reviews

THE ASL 1996 ANNUAL

"The rumors of my death are greatly exaggerated." Mark Twain

The Annual is out. I had one, in my hot little hands, but I had to send it off to Austria in exchange for a Wiener Universitat t-shirt and a picture of the Austrian Women's Ski team in their birthday suits (good trade, eh?--thanks Fritz!). At \$12.80 from Boulder Games, it has got to be the best ASL bargain in a long, long time.

Articles: Mine, on Winter warfare. Reading it, I can't help but be astounded by how good MMP made me look. Dade's, on cave warfare. The graphics are great, and I can't help but be astounded by how good MMP made Dade look. :) The crowning glory, though, is the Mark Nixon analysis of the CdG scenarios. TFA. Curt Schilling's article, on Gliders, Steve Peterson's, on Doubletiming and Ole Boe's, on moving, and motion vehicles all show a new comitment in the pages of the annual to making even stiffes like me into better players, rather than fill the pages with some analysis of how many trucks the Americans had per man vs. the Russians. (Has anybody read through all these articles?) [I have! -jds] I can't help but wonder what the people who buy it think if they haven't seen Backblast.

Scenarios: This is an above-average lot. Road to Gora is a great scenario. People will be playing this one at a lot of tournaments. Tasimboko Raid is one of my all-time favorite scenarios. Drive for "Tairchzung" looks really good. Mayhem in Manilla is a great early war PTO city slugfest. I played Highway 5, and didn't particullly have a lot of luck, but it's PTO tank fun. Lots of early war actions and overall, this group is very short on the tired, Western Front, 12 British 648 squads against 8 German 548 squads.

Therefore, I pronounce this the best annual yet. The quality of the MMP articles and editing shine through--as does the commitment to put out balanced, fun scenarios.

Corporal Otto Snudl

Tim Hundsdorfer

Snudl's new platoon was headquartered in a decrepit machine shop near the railroad station. His squad leader had been blown up on morning patrol by a particularly devilish booby trap. The squad was being led by a Gefreiter, and the squad gunner looked to be about 17 years old.

Snudl had managed to keep Werner with him, and they were fortifying the machine shop as best they could. The men of the squad looked up to Snudl, who was oldest among them, but he felt woefully ill-equipped. Snudl was much better at scrounging some extra rations or getting transport somewhere than he was at developing fortifications.

When nightfall came, Snudl called Werner and another young trooper and asked permission from the squad leader to do a little foraging. Supplies were short, and the squad leader nodded his approval. Truth be told, he resented Snudl's respect from the rest of the squad, and could care less whether he came back or not. Stalingrad was a bad place to be at night, the squad leader knew, and Snudl would learn that shortages or no shortages, it was best to stay where they were assigned than dare to go scrounging.

Snudl, Werner, and the young trooper (his name was Kuechler), followed the tracks down to where Kuechler knew a PzIII platoon was bivouaced. They had a box of smoke grenades that had been left by an earlier occupant of the machine shop, and they hoped to score some petrol for petrol bombs.

However, the PzIII platoon had moved out, leaving a few cans of petrol which were only partially empty.

"Damn tankers," Snudl grumbled. "They have so much they leave behind crumbs for us mice!"

They gathered the cans and spent about 15 minutes trying to get the diesel fuel into one can, which was about half full. Enough for only a few petrol bombs, they would be very welcome if Russian tanks came though, as the squad had no teller mines and only a few grenades.

Kuechler went a little further down the tracks while Snudl and Werner poured the fuel together. Something was wrong, Kuechler thought, and headed down to the next company he knew to be along the tracks. Russian voices in the distance told him that the company had pulled back.

He made his way back to Snudl and Werner as they were finishing up.

"K company has pulled out," he whispered.

"That's left us in the soup," said Snudl, putting his helmet back on and pulling the strap tight. "Where is our flank?" Kuechler just shrugged. A flare from the south, away from their squad, brought a loud "HURRAH", and a spurt of automatic weapons fire. Within seconds, the scream of incoming artillery, followed by the explosions of 75MM shells, convinced them to hurry back to the squad.

Most members of the squad were glad when Snudl returned, but the squad leader (Snudl found out his name was Gruenfeld), only sneered and suggested Snudl had caused the ruckus which was clearly audible from the machine shop. After about 20 minutes, the artillery went quiet and the squad was hurrying to put together the petrol bombs.

Gruenfeld crawled off through the rubble to find out from the company XO why their flanking units had pulled out (and probably to see if he could get something hot to eat). Snudl, realizing Gruenfeld's oversight, assigned two men to keep watch and pulled his coat around him and tried to sleep. Perhaps, he thought as he dozed off, the motor pool had not been so bad after all.

Achtung! Panzer! Update

Big changes. Well, pretty big. Reacting to suggestions of a number of folks, I'm changing the board alignment for A!P! for the May CG dates. The changes will allow the Allies to bring reinforcements to bear earlier.

Also, the motorcycle RG is trimmed back and certain problems with retention of motorcycles and horses are dealt with. Certain reductions are made to enable the French to make better advantage of armor.

Overall, I believe I'd take either side as it is, and I don't think this necessarily benefits the Allies exclusively--but it should make it more fun to play for them.

Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Tim Hundsdorfer

This month's lesson is in light mortars. Take two sides' mortars and half squads. Give them any board and let them duel it out until one side is eliminated. Use historical ELR's and a SAN of 4 for the side moving first and 3 for the side moving second. Switch nationalities and or half squad type and try it with different mortars and crews. Using SAN is very important, as light mortars generate a lot of dice rolling and it's an important element to remember when using light mortars.

Observe every aspect of firing the mortars. Notice the dynamics of moving them and firing them. Keep in mind air bursts and fire at moving targets. Attempt dismantling and assembling the mortars and other skills which you will use in a scenario. The use of acquisition counters and special ammo is important. You also want to add an extra half-squad and attempt spotted fire.

Writing down what happens, to confer with a more experienced player is an excellent idea. Possibly, one or two newer players can try this exercise while a more experienced player stands by to answer questions. Often during down times at a local tournament, there are people standing around who could help you (or whom you could help) by doing a simple exercise like this.

For the initiated veteran, this exercise may seem stupid. But for a newer player, learning the process of light mortar fire is important for playing almost ANY scenario. Even later on, learning the different capabilities of the Japanese light mortar or limitations of the Italian light mortar can be accomplished with this simple exercise.

It's simple, gives you ample opportunity to consult the rulebook as necessary, can be done solo, doesn't take a lot of time and WILL improve your play. The TO HIT process of light mortars is easily misunderstood and mistakes are easily made.

Lt. Mortar Flowchart:

101. Setting up
102. Read the ordinance notes for your mortar
103. Good lines of sight?
104. Opportunity for spotted fire?
105. Take into account advantages of special ammo.
106. Bore sight!
107. Plan to take advantage of air bursts.
108. Conceal yourself

201. Target becomes available.
202. Preliminary estimation of the Basic To Hit.
203. Is the hex acquired?
204. Is the target moving?

205. Is spotted fire necessary?
206. Judge costs/benefits of hitting
207. Calculate the TH
208. Keep track of ROF
209. Sniper!

301. Calculate the FP of the hit
302. Hits are resolved at ½ FP of the mortar's line on the IFT
303. Critical hits are resolved at 2x the FP of the mortar's line on the IFT and reverse TEM (except air bursts!)
304. TEM applies, except for Woods, where a -1 air burst applies.

401. Morale Checks/Pin Checks
402. Sniper!

WWF Update from Tim Hundsdoerfer

There are going to be three, possibly four mini-tournaments at Wild West Fest this year, adding a new dimension to the tournament. All are optional, but not all will allow you to compete for the big prize: the Lilly Langtree memorial trophy.

Starting Friday at 8:00AM, Pete Shelling will be holding a mini-tournament open to 16 players. This mini-tournament consists of four, new, thoroughly playtested scenarios (including one designed by yours truly). All these scenarios have been thoroughly playtested by MMP, and Mark Nixon highly recommends this mini-tournament platform. So if you would like to win a copy of Pegasus Bridge(!) courtesy TAHGC and MMP, try your hand at a scenario you've never seen before. [Expect a coupon for Pegasus Bridge--see below].

On Saturday morning, we see the "Squad Bleeder" DYO mini-tournament. If you are out of the running, you'll want to sign up for this event. Squad Bleeder is a structured, semi-blind DYO system that maximizes fog-of-war, while minimizing the maze of DYO rules. This is the same tournament that Mark Nixon has run at ASLOK for the past 8 years, so you know the bugs are worked out. The winner gets a free pass into ASLOK96 or an ASLOK96 t-shirt.

Critical Hit is also providing a \$20 gift certificate for the player who wins the most CH scenarios over the course of the weekend. Perfect for those waiting to pick up Cemetery Hill.

Time on Target guys may also be providing some sort of prize or mini-tournament.

So there will be a lot going on this year.

Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention MAGE Con, going on in South Dakota the weekend after WWF. MAGE Con describes itself as the biggest tournament between Chicago and LA in 1995 (which won't be the case in 1996 :)) and is an all ASL tournament with specific scenarios (Including Smoke the Kents by the Enigmatic Dr. Martin Snow) which must be played. The variety of scenarios looks cool, with Franzen's Roadblock being one of my favorites on the list. If you'd like more information on MAGE Con, drop me a line. [Keep your pants on Dade, there will be no MtG played!]

Top Ten things to watch for at this year's WWF:

- 10) A new, relaxed (and unemployed) Tom Repetti.
- 9) Tim Hundsorfer "sightings"
- 8) Wasatch Brewery coasters.
- 7) Kinney, Nixon, Pleva, McGrath or Tapio in the final (What a prognosticator, eh?)
- 6) A well-rested Matt Shostak.
- 5) People will be looking for scenarios with German 6+1's so they can use their new purple Youse counter.
- 4) People will LOVE Park City but won't see much of it.
- 3) Jazbutis gets edged out by Wilson in the butt-ugly ASL player contest (too bad I won't be there, huh, Tim?)
- 2) The Tutlo Suite is the pleasure palace of TMI, with so many keys out to ski bunnies Tutlo will forfeit a \$15 deposit for extra keys!
- 1) Cariaga is run out of town when "MtG" cards are found in his luggage while he's breakfasting on quiche at the Main Street Cafe and Deli!

Have fun, guys and know, every moment, that I hate you all.

Check out the WWF web page at <http://www.cudenver.edu/~thundsdo/wwf.html> or e-mail Tim Wilson for details at tim_wilson@nols.edu

Last Call

As much as we'd like to see ASL products on the shelves, publishers are apparently taking their time to put out quality products:

I've learned that the rare and variant tank module, which has been much awaited by all (at least by me) and will be put out by Kinetic Energy (the legendary producers of ToT), has been delayed and will most likely be released this fall, at the earliest. Scenario playtesting is the likely culprit behind this, as I understand the counters are researched and ready...

Does the promise of a Pegasus Bridge as a prize at WWF mean that it's release is impending? I sort of doubt that we could call it IMPENDING. MMP is really putting it's back into this one and working hard to see that the mistakes in KGPII are not repeated. There is news about PB in the new annual. However, FALL is not too late to expect this, possibly even early 1997. The purchase options are extremely limited for the allies, but there will be lots of fun new toys for the Germans. Not Maeuser, but goofy French tanks and stuff. Late war, Western Front isn't my glass of Warmonger Weasel, but given the effort they've put in on this, and the fun German toys which will come with it, I'd consider it a must have. Also, it will be HASL that doesn't require a lifetime commitment to finish, lasting less than ten scenarios.

A word about submissions. They have been trickling in, and as they do, I put them here. But there must be more ideas out there, and I'm the right guy to exploit them. Otherwise, this looks like the self-absorbed ramblings of a bitter little man...

Next digest: expect my first attempt at a Platoon Leader CG, a recap of WWF, a simple look at working on beach landings, a list of scenarios with which you can use your 6+1 Youse counter, entering your beer in the first annual Digest "The Beers of ASL" contest, and cleaning baby goo off your mapboards...

Adios, lads, I'm back to playing papa!!!

Once again, copyrights apply as applicable, offer void in those countries where U.S. copyright law does not apply, unless applicable through international law, in which case it may apply, I'm not sure. (My lawyer is really stupid.)

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